



***Into the Blogosphere* Review Process: A Statement from the Editors**

Peer Review Board

Some thoughts about electronic scholarly publishing

Into the Blogosphere is a first in many ways. Along with it being the first scholarly collection focused on blog as rhetorical artifact, we are also taking an innovative approach to intellectual property and to publishing. Blogs represent the power of regular people to use the Internet for publishing. The ethos of blogging is collaborative and values the sharing of ideas; bloggers are not dependent on publishers to get their words out. Yet, as most scholars recognize, the peer-review process is important. Peer review provides a needed check and balance on information; it helps ensure the quality of research and the connection between individual research and the profession as a whole.

There are a number of peer reviewed journals in digital format, so in this respect, we are not the first. However, with an edited collection, the desired outcome is usually a hard-copy book, so the standard process has been to turn to a publisher with a proposal, then typically wait several years before the book actually comes out. Increasingly, the financial pressures on university presses are causing many to reconsider their ability to publish books of all sorts, with edited collections coming under close scrutiny because such works usually do not sell many copies.

Therefore, we are producing this peer-reviewed edited collection about blogging in the spirit of blogging but with a focus on scholarly work that has been through the peer review process. We thus can take advantage of the speed of electronic publishing, the web's hypertextual nature and new ways of reading, and the formatting and open communication conventions of blog writing while at the same time providing our readers with essays that are of a serious scholarly quality.

Our review process and assumptions

We started this process with an open call for papers. Once we had abstracts to consider, we began to assemble our peer review board. Like an editorial board of a journal, we needed reviewers whose expertise would match the type of papers we were soliciting. We also wanted reviewers who represented a range of institutions and geographic locations. We needed reviewers who knew a little something about blogging and web based communication and who also were experts in an appropriate research method and/or theoretical area.

As an editorial team, we reviewed abstracts and chose 20 (out of approximately 40 total) that we wished to invite to send in a full paper. We chose abstracts based on relevance of topic to the call for papers, clear and focused statement of the research involved, and the paper's timeliness and originality. As papers were sent in, we sent each paper out, blind, to two reviewers. We then sent reviewer comments (also blind) back to the authors and requested a final draft that included a cover memo explaining how they addressed reviewer suggestions. Then, as an editorial team, we read final papers once more to ensure that they were of the quality we wanted and that they had addressed the reviewer comments appropriately. Next came the production stage, working with our team of blog developers and designers and the University of Minnesota's blog site.

We have been aware that especially for assistant professors it will be important to show that the essay published in this collection is of a high standard and should count as much as a book chapter-perhaps it should count even more in that 1) it is innovative 2) each chapter has been individually peer reviewed by two independent reviewers, which is more than what sometimes is done for edited collections. We are aware that for many new faculty, a digital publication is often questioned simply because of it being in a digital medium, despite the fact that there are many long-standing peer reviewed journals on the Internet.

So, with that in mind, we have designed the web site to take advantage of the hypertextual functionality of the blog but also to allow authors and others to print hard copy versions that have the "look and feel" of a print journal article. And, we have created this letter that faculty can download and include in their tenure dossiers or annual faculty materials.

Letter for authors to include in their tenure or annual review files

15 June 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs is an edited collection that is published online, on a blog site hosted by the University of Minnesota and supported by the University of Minnesota libraries. The essays in this collection were subject to a blind peer review process: each essay was read independently by two scholars who are part of the collections' peer review board (see attached). In this way, the essays in this collection have been reviewed at least as rigorously, and perhaps more so, than chapters in a traditional edited collection (where, often, the entire collection is sent to 1-2 reviewers, and thus each essay does not get as close a read as it might.)

We hope that you will value the essay published in this collection at the same level you value a book chapter or peer reviewed paper, if not only for the scholarship and the peer review process employed but also because the essay is published in a digital format and thus will be freely available to graduate students, faculty, and others around the world. The author of each essay made a choice to publish her or his paper in a digital environment, and we hope you will support this choice to maintain scholarly standards of peer review while also supporting open access, new models of intellectual property, and the timely publication of scholarly materials.

Sincerely,

Laura Gurak, Smiljana Antonijevic, Laurie Johnson, Clancy Ratliff, Jessica Reyman Editors, Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs

Peer Review Board

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University of Minnesota

Nancy Baym
University of Kansas

Samantha Blackmon
Purdue University

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Nick Carbone
Bedford/St. Martin's

Mark Crane
Utah Valley State College

Lisa Ede
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